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April 29, 2008

Donald Silawsky
Office of Petroleum Reserves
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20585-0301

Re: Additional Comments on Proposed Petroleum Reserve Project
In or near Pascagoula River Basin, Mississippi

Dear Mr. Silawsky:

On Thursday April 10, 2008 I was the second person to speak in opposition to the Department of Energy's proposed placement of a strategic petroleum reserve in or near Richton, MS. You and your staff have an enormous job ahead of you – to review the public record that has been built. In addition, preparation of the Supplemental EIS will be an even bigger job. Upon review of the record, you will become aware that the SEIS will face thorough scrutiny and analysis by all stakeholders.

I have been openly critical of this proposed project for a number of reasons but it is difficult to single out the most egregious part of the project. From the very beginning of the public information/public input process, USDOE Agency staff have been evasive and disingenuous with local citizens and elected officials. As example I refer to the timing of the first public hearing – scheduled immediately after Hurricane Katrina. It is an outrage that it should have become necessary to request another hearing!

Your designated hearing officer – Mr. David Johnson – can enlighten you on the opposition this proposed SPR faces. Many attending the Pascagoula public hearing believe this project has been designated as for our area of Mississippi because we are without the financial and political strengths of other areas of the country. For example, it was noted that this type project would not even be proposed for the Chesapeake Bay area, or San Francisco.

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Mr. Johnson has claimed to have viewed the Nature Conservancy DVD "The Singing River, Rhythms of Nature". As it has been entered into the record, you too will have an opportunity to have a glimpse of our beautiful river. You will also have the opportunity to see as part of the record the Audubon website www.msaudubon.org/prac. Its primary theme is focused on the Pascagoula River, the last, large unimpeded river in the contiguous United States: a national and natural treasure.

You will review my comments, concerns and criticism from the April 10 public meeting as you make your way through review of the record. I am adding some additional information that you and your staff should include in the criteria for evaluating this project. Senate Bill 2727 from the 2004 Regular Legislative Session was approved by the Governor of Mississippi on April 29, 2004; this legislation began the process of designating the Pascagoula River as a Mississippi Scenic Stream. This special designation was created by the MS Legislature as a way to protect and conserve our valuable natural water resources. Very few rivers have made it all the way through the complex designation process but the Pascagoula River is not only valuable to our citizens as a natural resource, it is also an economic resource. MS Audubon has found that even as early as 2001, nature tourism had \$13.7 million impact on MS State sales tax revenue and that figure is growing exponentially. The citizens of Mississippi cannot afford for a Federal agency to cause a negative impact on our developing ecotourism industry. Ecotourism provides good, clean jobs that our citizens are proud to have.

Any independent, thorough cost/benefit analysis will reveal this proposed project to take more away from MS citizens than it would provide. As I said at the public hearing: this proposed project is unwanted, unnecessary, impractical and destructive.

Please refer to Mr. George H. Penn's letter regarding my request to have all information from ALL Federal and MS State agencies delivered into the USDOE record for this matter "as if copied verbatim and en extensor". I informed Mr. Johnson already USDOE must pay MS State agencies applicable expenses for the information as the State of MS cannot afford any extra expense.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Yours truly,



Deborah J. Dawkins

DD/pt